than the li in which there is cooperation for religion is the territory around Hsin Tien at the time of the Matsu festival. Matsu is one of the most important dieties on Taiwan and some scholars feel she is almost a focus of a separate cult. During the celebration dedicated to Matsu, her statue, together with other god's statues, are carried on sedan chairs in a procession to each village near Hsin Tien. Each village contributes money for the cost of the dragon dance team and sword dance team which accompanies the procession and also provides young men to carry the chairs. It is a gay occasion, especially since the li also provides its own additional ceremonies and entertainment during the same day and one or two days which follow.

Formal Religion

As far as the other formal religions are concerned, the village has a mixture of Confucianism,[8] Buddhism, Taoism, Official and local folk religions. These are so intermixed that it is impossible to fully extract individual sources and any attempt to do so would be worthless because the people do not care. Most of the larger temples scattered through Taiwan have similar admixtures of gods and rituals.

Religious Specialists

There are a variety of kinds of religious specialists consulted by villagers although none live in the

79 village itself. Each differs in the types of powers he possesses and/or the rituals he performs while two of the same type may have different qualitative ratings. Some specialists charge a fee for services and others depend on gifts. Nothing will be said directly if the gift is too small, but the practitioner will not return the next time he is called. Everyone knows what amount constitutes a proper gift. For the most part, the community has established rather permanent relations with certain individuals who have a regular practice in the area.

791 823 791 787 One significant type of practice involves specialists in feng shui (literally wind and water but usually termed geomancy). Geomancy is related to the Yin (negative) and Yang (positive) factors and the Five Elements: water, metal, fire, earth, and wood (Burkhardt, 1953:129-33). "Geomancy deals with the supernatural relation of geographical locations to human events" (C. K. Yang, 1967b:263). Certain geographical locations have influence on human life, negative or positive. These factors are especially important with regard to the location of tombs, building sites, and the kitchen stove. Almost all village adults are amateur geomancers, i.e., they possess rudimentary knowledge of significant elements. Moreover, villagers believe they can generalize from previous events. For instance, a house may be built right next door to a geomancer-directed house without professional consultation

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000 778 [353] important event: life crises, health, and economic. The home is the central focus of worship and in all but two village homes, the most elaborate and expensive furnishings are those connected with worship. The second most important center is the temple which is the most elaborate and expensive building in the community. Although Sanlei village is highly integrated, only for religion does the community gather in one place to act cooperatively with any degree of frequency. At the li level, the temple and religion serve a similar function except that in addition to religion, politics and the school also feature community-wide cooperation and joint activities. Religion is the unifying element, at least on a manifest basis, of larger kinship organizations such as the compound and lineage and such voluntary organizations as the sworn brothers and god's associations.

Religious values support the dictums of social control. Although there are reasonably high levels of skepticism regarding the efficacy of religious acts, no man is truly an atheist, i.e., although many claim not to believe that a particular act works or has power for good or evil, almost everyone is afraid not to perform the required ritual when it is specified as appropriate.

There are so many kinds of religious and magical functionaries, that one can be found to recommend almost any kind of desired action. This recommendation supports

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771 a villager in what otherwise might be an unpopular decision or action because he can then say the gods so order it.

Additionally, religious events are fun and along with certain life crises events, almost the only periods of gaiety in an otherwise fairly drab existence. It appears, as suggested in Potter's conception of "The Limited Good," richer villagers do fear to practice conspicuous consumption (1965). One normally avoids coming to the attention of villagers, government officials, and gods, in order to avoid arousing feelings of jealousy, but rich food and drink is not only permitted but is strongly encouraged for holidays. It is proper to offer expensive foods to the gods and whatever is left over when the gods finish can be eaten by anyone without fear of censure. Indeed, it should be shared with guests for jealousy is not aroused when people are only eating the god's left-
[554] overs. This set of beliefs permits both self-indulgence and a means for validating one's social position in the community, i.e., the richer the food, the higher the status. For guests (especially poorer ones), there is an opportunity to eat rich foods and delicacies rarely experienced.

It will be demonstrated in Chapter IX that religion also serves to regulate the divisions of time--yearly, monthly, and daily and that much of the leisure time is justified on a religious basis.